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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 21, 1931.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "The Kitchen Sink". Information from the Bureau of Public Roads, U.S.D.A.

Bulletins available: "Farm Plumbing".

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My Next-Door Neighbor came into my kitchen breathless and fanning herself as if it was a hot day in midsummer. She sat down quicky in the chair I offered appearing almost at the point of collapse.

"Do I look pale, Aunt Sammy?" she asked. "Do I look shocked and horrified? Are my eyes standing out of my head? They ought to be after what I've just seen."

"Get your breath," I said. "And take a good drink of cold water. Then tell me all about it. I suspect that you've been wearing yourself out trying to entertain the guest at your house."

"I feel as if I'd been drawn through a knot-hole, Aunt Sammy. I really do. But it's not from entertaining. No. It's from shock--the result of the sight I've just witnessed in my own kitchen. Such an experience for any woman who believes in careful housekeeping! No telling when I shall recover--if ever."

My Neighbor fanned herself again. I brought her a glass of water.

"Now then," I said, "you'll feel much better if you get this awful event out of your system by telling me about it as quickly as possible."

"Let me begin by offering a word of advice from one who knows. Never let any visitor, no matter how nice she is, wash your dishes until you have seen her in action in her own home. If you are fond of your new kitchen sink, as I am, and if you believe in keeping your plumbing fixtures in order, be sure how they are going to be treated at dishwashing time."

"What happened at your house?"

"Oh, it was dreadful. You know how delighted I was when Emmaline came to make me a visit. We have been friends for years, you know. But I doubt now if I ever feel the same toward her again. The sad part of it is that she really intended to do me a favor, to lend a helping hand on my busy day. It happened this way. Emmaline knew that I was going to be especially rushed to-day, so she urged me to let her wash the breakfast dishes while I went on with my other work. I accepted with pleasure. It was very thoughtful of Emmaline to suggest it. Well, my dear, when I went out to the kitchen a few minutes later, what a sight met my eyes! There was Emmaline, looking as neat as pie in her green apron, but she was actually pouring the bacon fat down the sink. I

gasped and was speechless. Before I could catch my breath and beg, 'Please, Emmaline, spare the drain,' she had picked up the coffee pot and emptied the contents--grounds and all--into the sink right on top of the grease. Then she turned on the cold water faucet to wash it all down the drain. Giving me one of her bright smiles, she said, 'Coffee grounds I've been told, help clear out the drain pipes.' That was enough. I couldn't stand to see anything more. So I left as rapidly as possible, still speechless. Think of the grease caked in my pipes by that bath of cold water. And think of coffee grounds lodged there, too. Isn't it depressing that an intelligent woman like Emmaline would treat plumbing that way?"

I tried to console my Neighbor by telling her that perhaps she was taking this episode too seriously. As every plumber knows, there are, alas, many Emmalines in this world. That is why drains are clogged, and pipes fill up, and lots of other plumbing troubles arise. In spite of the fact that plumbing is among the expensive items in housebuilding, a large number of people are careless about the way they use it.

Solid substances tend to clog traps and drains; grease adheres to the inside of waste pipes and gradually closes them. Even the wash stand trap may gather soap, grease, hair and lint sufficient to stop it up completely. Of course, garbage, rags, threads, cotton, hair, newspaper, matches and anything else that is not readily soluble in water should never be thrown into water closets or other fixtures. And grease and fats should not go into sink outlets. Good plumbing well cared for pays because it causes little trouble or expense.

Since we're on the subject, we might discuss the proper care of the kitchen sink. What to do with left-over grease since it must not be poured down the drain? My Neighbor says she always collects grease from cooking in a bowl or cup and lets it cool and harden. Some of it can be used again in cooking. The rest can be thrown away with the garbage. No grease goes down my Neighbor's sink, if she knows it. She scrapes her dishes carefully, before washing, and uses plenty of hot soapsuds so her dish water does not become greasy.

Would you be interested in hearing how she cares for her sink? She cleans it regularly with soap and hot water, and removes any stains with a cloth dampened with ammonia water. Occasionally, she wipes over or lightly scours the discolored surface with a soft damp cloth dusted with whiting or other fine soft scouring powder. Acids, harsh abrasives, or violent scouring should be avoided as they tend to dull or destroy the glazed surface of sinks, bath tubs and other fixtures.

Since the bathroom is usually used by several people in the family it is important for everyone's health that it should be cleaned every day and cleaned carefully. If a soft brush is kept near the basin or tub, it will encourage each member of the family to clean these fixtures after using. If the water is soft, soap and hot water will usually keep the tub in good condition, though now and then it will need a little scouring with fine powder. If the water is hard, water softening compounds, will help remove the hard-water ring and the sticky scum that gathers in the tub or basin. If a softener is used in the water and the tub washed out immediately after the bath, cleaning will not be difficult. If you want your tub, your basin and your sink to give long service and keep their looks, avoid using anything on them that might harm their surface glaze.

No sharp or pointed utensils, no sandpaper, gritty powder, scouring soap, oil, acid or acid preparations. Treat your enamelware like your table crockery and rely mainly on hot water and soap for cleaning.

Since nickel faucets tarnish very little they need only to be washed with soap, rinsed and dried thoroughly with a soft cloth. Faucets should never be jammed. If they drip after moderate pressure on the handle, it is because they probably need new washers. Washers are small round disks about one-eighth of an inch thick; they are usually made of asbestos and rubber or fiber composition. Instead of letting the water drip and waste until a plumber can be reached, a housekeeper can do this little job herself, when the water is turned off. I won't go into the details here, because you'll find very explicit directions in the plumbing bulletin. I told you about it a few weeks ago and am again suggesting it to-day.

In case the trap on your waste pipe becomes plugged up, the bulletin will also give you helpful advice about cleaning it out. Stop a minute. Here's a housekeeper who has been listening to the conversation all this time and has just let on that she doesn't know what the word "trap" means in this connection. She's heard about mouse-traps, fly traps and woodchuck traps, but this is a new one. A trap in a waste pipe is the curved section, so arranged that water stands in it and thus forms a seal that prevents the passage of bad odors into the room. Occasional flushing of the waste pipe from a plumbing fixture, with hot water aids in carrying the solid matter from the trap and leaving it in a sanitary condition.

Friday: "Strawberry Shortcake for Sunday Dinner."

